

PAINTED POTTERY FROM THE LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT AT DIVICI – GRAD, ROMANIA. AN INSIGHT INTO ITS DISTRIBUTION AND THE INTERACTION IN THE IRON GATES OF THE DANUBE*

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CERAMICA PICTATĂ DIN AȘEZAREA DE A DOUA EPOCĂ A FIERULUI DE LA DIVICI – GRAD, ROMÂNIA. O PRIVIRE ASUPRA INTERACȚIUNII ÎN ZONA PORȚILOR DE FIER ALE DUNĂRII

REZUMAT: Cercetările arheologice care s-au desfășurat mai bine de un deceniu în așezarea fortificată de pe dealul Grad din localitatea Divici, jud. Caraș-Severin, au adus o contribuție semnificativă pentru cunoașterea celei de a doua epoci a fierului în defileul Dunării din zona Porților de Fier. Descoperirile din așezare au un aspect variat care ilustrează legături cu diferite medii culturale și zone geografice, precum Dacia, spațiul scordisc și mediul La Tène, și cel roman. În acest context, ceramica pictată reprezintă un aspect special al producției ceramice. Cu toate că prezența sa în așezarea de la Divici-Grad a fost semnalată anterior, piesele nu s-au bucurat de o descriere detaliată în literatura de specialitate. Majoritatea fragmentelor au fost găsite într-un turn-locuință datat în secolul I p.Chr. Aici vasele formează un lot unitar din punct de vedere al tehnicii de realizare și al decorului. Pe baza acestor caracteristici ele au putut fi cu asociate producției ceramice din mediul La Tène, mai exact cu stilul decorativ dezvoltat la est de așezarea de la Manching, inclusiv.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: ceramică pictată, Porțile de Fier, finalul epocii fierului, interacțiune, Dacia

ABSTRACT: The archaeological research of the fortified settlement from Divici-Grad has significantly contributed to the understanding of the Iron Gates area of the Danube in the Late Iron Age. The finds are characterized by variety, being associated with different geographical and cultural milieus, such as Dacia, Scordiscan and La Tène, as well as Roman. Among these the painted pottery represents a special aspect of the ceramic production. Although its presence at Divici-Grad was previously mentioned, none has been published so far. An important number of finds were discovered in a tower-house dated in the 1st century AD. They form a unitary lot according to their production and decoration characteristics. At the same time, by their features they can be easily ascribed to the La Tène style painted pottery, particularly from the Eastern part of its distribution.

KEYWORDS: painted pottery, Iron Gates, Late Iron Age, interaction, Dacia

* The material was made available for study with the support of A. Rustoiu, member of the research team of the Dacian fortification from Divici, with the collaboration of the Mountainous Banat Museum (Muzeul Banatului Montan), Reșița, where the finds are deposited.

This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007–2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/107/1.5/S/77946 with the title „Doctorate: an Attractive Research Career”.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological excavations on the Grad hill from the village of Divici, jud. Caraș-Severin, set on the bank of the Danube, began in 1985 following the identification of an important number of vestiges belonging to the second half of the Late Iron Age (Pl. 1). The research, which continued for over a decade, led to the documentation of a large settlement structure comprising a fortified area on the hill-top and other inhabitancy on the neighboring hill and on the Danube riverside.

So far only the hill-top has been extensively excavated, mainly on the North-Western part of its upper plateau. Here stand two rectangular structures built in stone with a brick storey from the second (second half of the 1st century BC – beginning of the 1st century AD), and respectively the third inhabitancy level (1st century AD). This type of building has numerous analogies in the fortified structures from pre-Roman Dacia where, based on their particular architecture, position and finds, they have been interpreted as elite houses¹. The fact that the tower-houses from Divici-Grad were inhabited is documented through a considerable amount of pottery and other metal implements. At the same time the materials have a particular aspect compared to other houses on the hill-top, especially visible in the more recent structure, where the number of painted pottery and storage vessels was considerably larger. These were found in a determined area inside the building, in and close to the so called “hearth with *dolia*”² (Pl. 2).

DESCRIPTION OF FINDS (PL. II–III)

The painted pottery from the tower-house of the last inhabitancy level from Divici-Grad is uniform in its technique and it can be established that it's the result of the same production process. The pottery was wheel-thrown using refined clay. The firing was mostly made in a reducing atmosphere, but changed at one point to an oxidizing environment, thus generating a gray core and light brown outer rims in the wall section. The painted decoration was applied, as far as the finds allow the reconstruction, on a limited array of pottery forms. Most of those that could be determined are pots of a globular shape and flaring rim (Pl. 3/3; 4/4, 8, 9). The form generally characterizes the La Tène ceramic development and was at the same time the most frequently painted type, as it could be observed at Manching³, Gellérthegey-Taban⁴, in Southern Poland⁵, Bohemia⁶ or Serbia⁷.

A large part of a bowl has also been recovered, allowing a rather accurate reconstruction of its shape (Pl. 3/1). The closest analogies come from the Roman provincial pottery production from Moesia Superior and Pannonia. The painting of bowls is rather frequent, their varied types being chosen from the daily used forms. However, a certain preference can be discerned locally, as well as superregional, such as the almost exclusive use of hemispheric bowls in Gomolava⁸. Otherwise, most often the paint was applied on Roanne bowls, a Roman provincial product of globular shape developed at the end of the 1st century BC in Gaul. This type was commonly painted on large areas from Gaul to Budapest⁹. Although the piece from Divici-Grad resembles the general shape of Roanne bowls, to which it could be connected from the point of view

¹ Glodariu 1983, 26–29.

² Gumă, Luca, Săcărîn 1987, 208.

³ Maier 1970, 15–18.

⁴ Bónis 1969, Abb. 6/10, 7/1, 2, 6, 13/19, 30/1–3, 64/4.

⁵ Woźniak 1990, 118–119; Poleska 2011, fig. 2/17–19.

⁶ Breň 1973, Tab. II–IV, VII–VIII.

⁷ In general, other types of pots were painted in the Scordiscian area, with wider opening, similar shapes to those from Divici-Grad being more rarely decorated: Gavela 1952, Sl. 42/2; Filip 1956, T. XIX/4 (Osijek); Todorović 1972, T. XXIX/Grob 96–1, XXXVIII/Grob 203–2 (Beograd-Karaburma); Stalio 1986; Jovanović, Jovanović 1988, T. IV/2, XXXVIII/7, XL/1 (Gomolava).

⁸ Jovanović, Jovanović 1988, T. IV/4, 6, XIV/7, 9, XV/1–3, XXXII/3.

⁹ Bónis 1969, Abb. 30/15–17, 99/1, 4; Breň 1973, Tab. III/5–7, IV/6, 7, 9–14, VI; Woźniak 1990, 118–119; Grand 1995, 179–180.

of ceramic development, its shoulder is angular, with few parallels in the repertoire of painted pottery, similar vessels coming from Kraków¹⁰ and Roman Gomolava¹¹. It is unclear whether another fragmentary vessel is to be connected to the bowl above, given their similar decoration. It was here reconstructed as part of a lid (Pl. 3/2). Although not frequent, lids were also painted in the Eastern La Tène area, some examples being known in Manching¹² and Bohemia¹³.

The ornamentation style is uniform, using different shades of red and white, thus resulting in consecutive strips painted in polished orange red, red or dark red and sepia applied on a white coating. Only in one case brown was used as coating (Pl. 3/2). The decoration either covered the entire surface, with thin strips of clay left undecorated, or only the upper part. Additionally, undecorated clay areas have also been polished (Pl. 3/1). A large amount of the finds from Divici-Grad displays a more complex decorative system, using red and white strips as background for geometrical patterns. These always had the same base color as their background (Pl. 3/1, 2; 4/1, 2, 3, 6). The patterns were painted in lighter or darker sepia on a white background. Other thin horizontal, vertical or diagonal strips were used alone or in combination to demarcate the main decorative field or the recurrent metopes of ornamentation. These are either grouped lines or ladder-like patterns. Zigzags were used as an isolated decoration or within the metopes, which they diagonally separate. Along with these, more complex geometric grid rhombs appear, some with stylized elements that could be interpreted as wings or flippers. Also, recurrent vertical triglyphs of darker red were applied on red strips.

The integrity of the ornamentation system preserved on the bowl deserves a closer look in the following lines (Pl. 3/1). The ware is decorated on almost its entire surface, except for the upper part of the lip. The background for the painted motifs is a sequence of larger strips of polished red and white nuances, intertwined with thinner sepia strips. The upper part is decorated with grid sepia rhombs arranged in a horizontal series that runs the entire circumference of the bowl, painted on a white coating. Dark red strips are framing this field above and below. The latter is decorated in its turn with repeated triglyphs of darker shade. This, together with a sepia strip, marks the beginning of the main decorative field, which is formed by repeated metopes that run horizontally in the lower part of the bowl, separated by a sepia ladder-like motif. Within each metop three diagonal sepia lines organize two grid rhombs, to which are attached stylized pairs of what appears to resemble wings or flippers. All the elements listed above have been widely employed in the painted decoration of the Eastern La Tène style. Their isolation to certain areas is difficult when each motif is taken separately, but more could be said about the combinations of patterns. Series of grid rhombs are characteristic to Manching¹⁴, Bohemia¹⁵ and Southern Poland¹⁶, while this particular arrangement is missing in Budapest¹⁷ or Gomolava¹⁸. However, nothing special can be said about the organization of painted motifs in metopes, given that this is very frequent in the Eastern La Tène style with more complex ornamentation. The use of ladder-like separations or triglyphs is again very common in La Tène painted pottery.

THE FINDS FROM DIVICI-GRAD IN THE CONTEXT OF EASTERN LA TÈNE PAINTED POTTERY

It's been about four decades since Ferdinand Maier published his book on the painted pottery from the oppidum of Manching¹⁹. Apart from being the first exhaustive monograph on painted pottery from

¹⁰ Poleska 2011, fig. 2/18.

¹¹ Dautova-Ruševljan, Brukner 1992, T. 15/99.

¹² Maier 1970, T. 19/427–429, 92/1253.

¹³ Břeň 1973, T. V/8, 9, 15.

¹⁴ Maier 1970, T. 83.

¹⁵ Břeň 1973, T. VI/7, VIII/1–3, XI/6, 7.

¹⁶ Poleska 2011, fig. 2/21.

¹⁷ See Bónis 1969.

¹⁸ See Jovanović, Jovanović 1988.

¹⁹ Maier 1970.

a site, F. Maier was also the first to give a relatively fair image of the distribution of painted pottery from France to as far as Romania. Although much can be added to his catalog in the light of ulterior discoveries, it is the latest synthetic round-up. Otherwise, finds were published within site presentations or in articles focusing on a specific site or region. The most recent effort to gain a general perspective on this special category of material was made at the International Symposium of Hautvillers (9–11 October 1987), later published in 1991, exclusively dedicated to painted pottery from all across Europe²⁰. The Eastern part of the La Tène world is presented in two articles, one concerning the Scordiscian territory²¹, the other offering an overall view on the painted pottery in the Carpathian Basin, which provide an updated list of sites from Slovakia to as far as Romania²². A more extensive perspective has been given by Ch. G. Cumberpatch in his PhD Thesis on production and circulation of painted ceramic from Central Europe²³. This picture can be completed with finds from Hungary (Budaörs, Pátyi)²⁴, Poland (region of Krakow)²⁵, Ukraine (Malaja Kopanja²⁶, Solotvino-Cetate²⁷), Serbia²⁸, Romania²⁹, and Bulgaria (Krivina)³⁰. Early Roman production of painted pottery hasn't enjoyed the same attention, but was nevertheless presented for individual sites (e.g. Budaörs, Pátyi, Gomolava). The technological aspects of the manufacture of painted ware were additionally explored by some scholars, both for Late La Tène³¹ and Roman times³². To this list the finds from Divici-Grad are now added.

During the 2nd century BC, namely the La Tène C2 chronological phase (or even earlier³³), painted pottery reappears in Western Europe and soon spreads towards east, in the areas defined by the La Tène cultural aspect, becoming one of the 'trademarks' of this world. This happened in a relatively short time, already during the La Tène C2³⁴. Its characteristics are not uniform everywhere, but some general developments can be inferred. The painting was done mainly on elongated or globular forms of pots and jars, but also on a larger variety of shapes³⁵. The general decorative concept has at its basis the combination of lighter and darker nuances derived from white and red color. The simplest ornamentation is constructed through alternate strips of these contrasting nuances, where one of them, usually lighter shades, can serve as coating. This background is sometimes decorated on the most visible part of the ware with geometric and vegetal or animal stylized representations using darker nuances of the coating (grey/sepia on white, brown on red).

Although most of the decorative models are common to the entire area where the La Tène painted pottery is found, several stylistic differences can be distinguished owing to preference towards certain motives, combinations, arrangement on the support ware and particular ornament, but manifested also in the types of ware decorated. It is noticed so the frequent use of vegetal and animal stylized representations in the Western La Tène areal, whereas towards east these become very rare or absent³⁶. The Eastern La Tène

²⁰ Hautvillers 1991.

²¹ Jovanović 1991.

²² Szabó 1991.

²³ Cumberpatch 1991; later published as articles: Cumberpatch 1993a; 1993b.

²⁴ Ottományi 2005.

²⁵ Poleska 2011.

²⁶ Kotigoroško 1991, 122, fig. 3.

²⁷ Vasiliev *et alli* 2002, 69, fig. 111/6–8.

²⁸ Sladić 2009.

²⁹ Florea 1998, 54–62.

³⁰ Vagalinski 2011, 224–225, fig. 5/11–14, 16–17; 7.

³¹ Wirska-Parachoniak 1980; Cumberpatch 1991; 1993a; 1993b.

³² Čremošnik 1984.

³³ Loughton 2005, 156.

³⁴ Maier 1970, 145–163; Hautvillers 1991, 289–294.

³⁵ See Maier 1970, 15–41; Chossenot 1991; Cliquet *et alli* 1991, 200–209; Guichard, Picon, Vaginay 1991, 214–218, fig. 8; Périchon 1991; Soyer 1991; Miron 1991, 268.

³⁶ Maier 1970, 60–62, T. 86–91: a small number compared to the amount of painted ceramic; Břeň 1973, 150, T. IX/3 (Stradonice).

area is characterized, on a general perspective, by the almost exclusive use of geometric patterns³⁷. Regarding the support, the variety of ware types is larger here, using also forms particular to the local background. The tall and ovoid pottery shapes are preferred though³⁸. The structure of the decoration follows the principle of main decorative field³⁹ that occupies the upper part of the ware, between the shoulder and below the maximum diameter of the vessel, framed by horizontal zones of color. Red tryglyphs or series of triangles and ladder-like patterns often decorate these zones. The main decorative field depicts geometric motives arranged in repetitive and symmetrical metopes, separated by vertical geometric patterns. For decoration the most popular are grid elements, zigzags of simple or multiple lines and ladder-like motifs.

Some regional or local developments can be observed, yet not very marked. This is the case of wavy lines painted on a lighter background, mostly produced on the territory identified with the tribe of Eravisci⁴⁰, rarely elsewhere⁴¹. Full circles haven't reached these areas, being limited to Manching, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia⁴². Other patterns were used on a larger geographical scale, such as zigzags⁴³ (very often in Gomolava⁴⁴) and grid rhombs⁴⁵, sometimes arranged in horizontal sequence in Bohemia⁴⁶ and Southern Poland⁴⁷. Animal and human figures begin to be painted during the Roman times in the continuation of the local tradition of pottery painting.

REGIONAL PRODUCTION CENTERS OR LOCALLY PRODUCED?

It was shown above that the painted pottery from Divici-Grad can be connected in general lines with the production from the Eastern La Tène areal. Although some elements point to the areas of Budapest, Bohemia and Southern Poland, a complete identification is difficult. One of the causes is the variety of painted decoration, particularly when it comes to geometric motifs, which are commonly used for the elaboration of patterns, but rarely in the exact same model. The finds from Divici-Grad are until now not very numerous, thus can be considered as imported into the settlement. At the same time, the open settlement, where the ceramic production could have taken place, is not researched. To the question about the origin of painted pottery in Divici-Grad adds the apparent chronological difference with the last products of the La Tène style in painted pottery, already replaced in imperial times by a markedly different ornamentation style.

The concerns around the production of Eastern La Tène painted pottery are not limited to Divici-Grad. Beside the uniform artistic concept with only some stylistic variations, the technology of production is very similar and petrography gives limited results on a regional level due to the high refinement of the clay. The information available today is strongly biased towards sites that have enjoyed particular archaeological interest. Unavoidably, production was associated with these sites. However, physical proof of production is rather scarce⁴⁸. On some sites this is indicated by production waste⁴⁹. In the settlement from Tabán three

³⁷ See Bónis 1969, Abb. 6/12 (Tabán); 30/1 (Gellérthegey): where an animal and one vegetal depiction can be interpreted.

³⁸ Bónis 1969, 169–170, with decoration: Abb. 64/3 (Gellérthegey); Břeň 1973, T. I–XII; Jovanović, Jovanović 1988, 105, with decoration: T. XIV/7, 9, XXIV/7, XXXI/5a-b; Poleska 2011, fig. 2, 7, 8/3.

³⁹ Maier 1970, 42–43.

⁴⁰ Hunyady 1942, 147, T. XCV/3, XCVIII/5 (Békásmegyer); Bónis 1969, 170 (Budapest/Tabán, Gellérthegey); Szabó 1991, 276, fig. 1 (Százhalombatta).

⁴¹ Filip 1956, CIII/3 (Devín), CXXIX/21 (Polepy); Točík 1959, 848, Obr. 323/2 (Nitrianski Hrádok); Vagalinski 2011, 223–224, fig. 5/11–14, 16–17; 7 (Krivina).

⁴² Břeň 1973, 150

⁴³ Bónis 1969, Abb. 6/10, 12, 7/2, 23/32, 57/2,3 ; Poleska 2006, 2011.

⁴⁴ Jovanović, Jovanović 1988, T. IV/3, XIII, XIV/1–3, XXII, XXX/11, XXXI/5.

⁴⁵ Bónis 1969, Abb. 5/20, 6/10, 12, 28/2, 30/1, 57/1, 64/3.

⁴⁶ Břeň 1973, T. VI/7, VIII/1–3, XI/6, 7.

⁴⁷ Poleska 2011, fig. 2/21.

⁴⁸ Břeň 1973, 150.

⁴⁹ Poleska 2011, 49 (Kraków-Krzesławice, Kraków-Pleszów).

painted wares have been stamped with a Victoria *gemma*, probably a potter's mark, fact confirmed by their markedly better quality and more complex geometric decoration⁵⁰.

The data about production is supplemented by petrographic analyses, which additionally contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms of distribution. At present comparative studies are available for Moravia and Bohemia⁵¹, Slovakia, Southern Poland and Transdanubia⁵². Their results suggest a mainly local and regional distribution. Distinctive exotic types of ware that appear on several sites have not revealed petrographic particularity, indicating that they should be regarded as results of imitation and not import⁵³. This illustrates that it is more plausible that people, carrying with them knowledge about technology and ideas, circulated rather than fragile ceramic products, at least not in a regular conduct, although limited distribution shouldn't be dismissed.

The interpretation of the painted pottery from Divici-Grad is difficult to assess in this direction given the small number of finds and their fragmentation, allowing only limited determination of forms and more complex decoration. The chronological issue adds to these questions, the finds corresponding to a time when painted pottery has already transformed in stylistic aspects and the concepts represented. Petrographic analysis, as well as the complete evaluation of the material excavated at Divici-Grad, will allow more conclusions about the painted pottery finds. However, it is already obvious that they are the result of long distance interaction on the Danube, particularly with the Middle Danube. Finally, to the same production area correspond also the few finds of painted pottery found on the territory ascribed to Dacian and Getic populations⁵⁴.

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⁵⁰ Bónis 1969, 173–174.

⁵¹ Cumberpatch 1993b.

⁵² Wirska-Parachoniak 1980; Cumberpatch 1993a.

⁵³ Cumberpatch 1993a, 70: refers to a miniature storage jar from Gellérthege that belongs to a typological group used in Northern Slovakia and Poland and a chalice rim jar from Esztergom, form characteristic for Northern and Eastern Slovakia and Poland.

⁵⁴ Florea 1998, 56–62.

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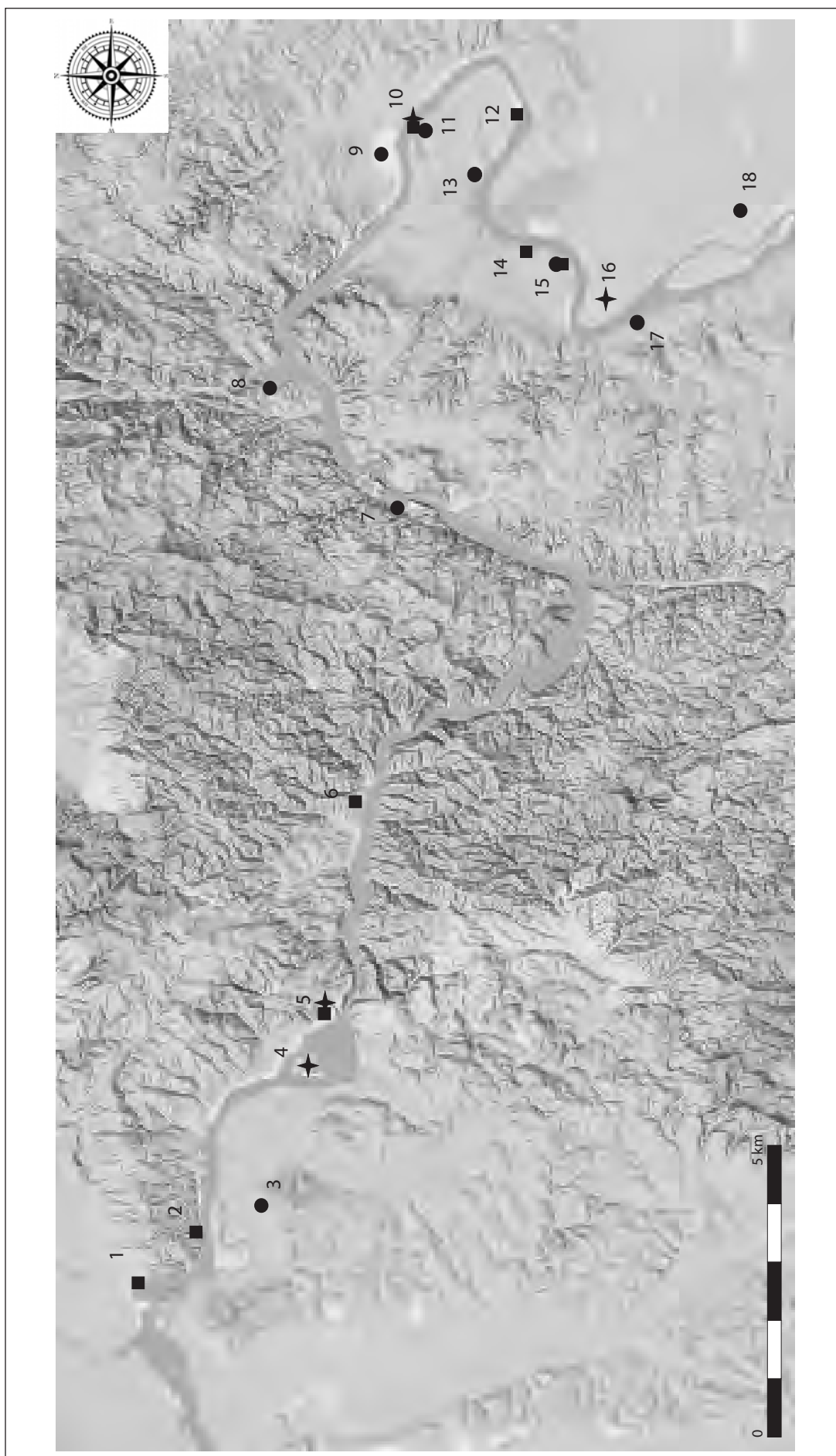
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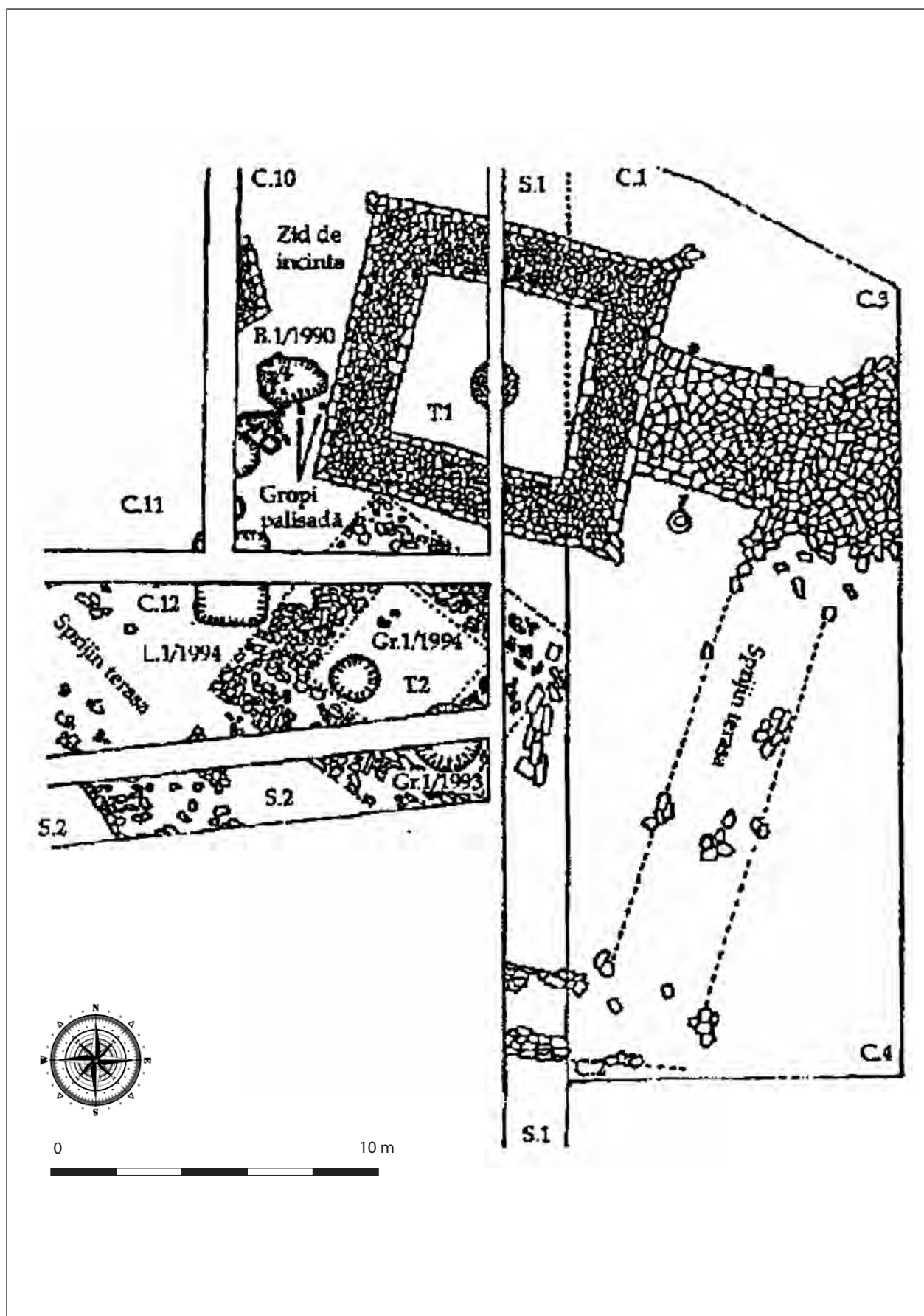
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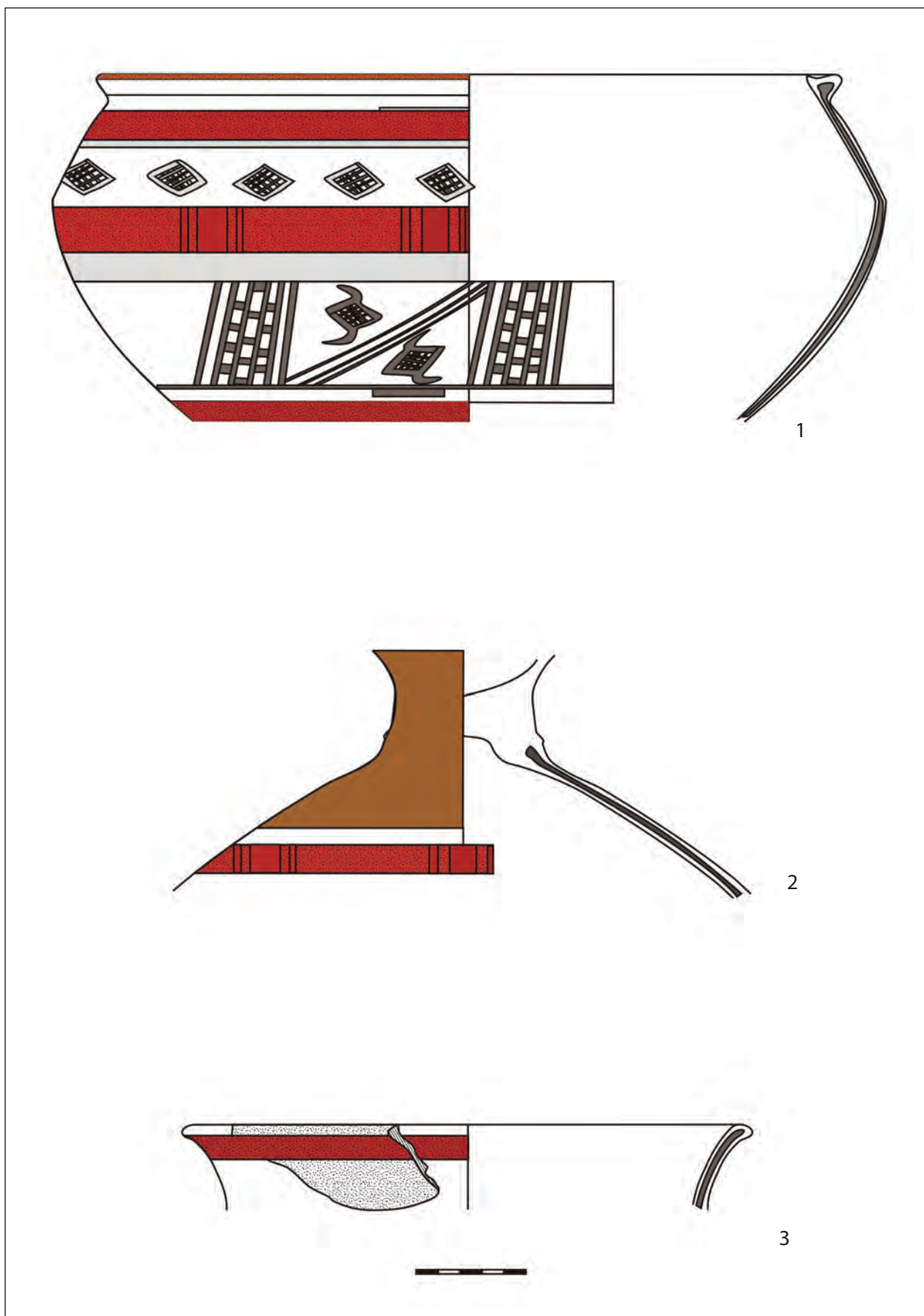
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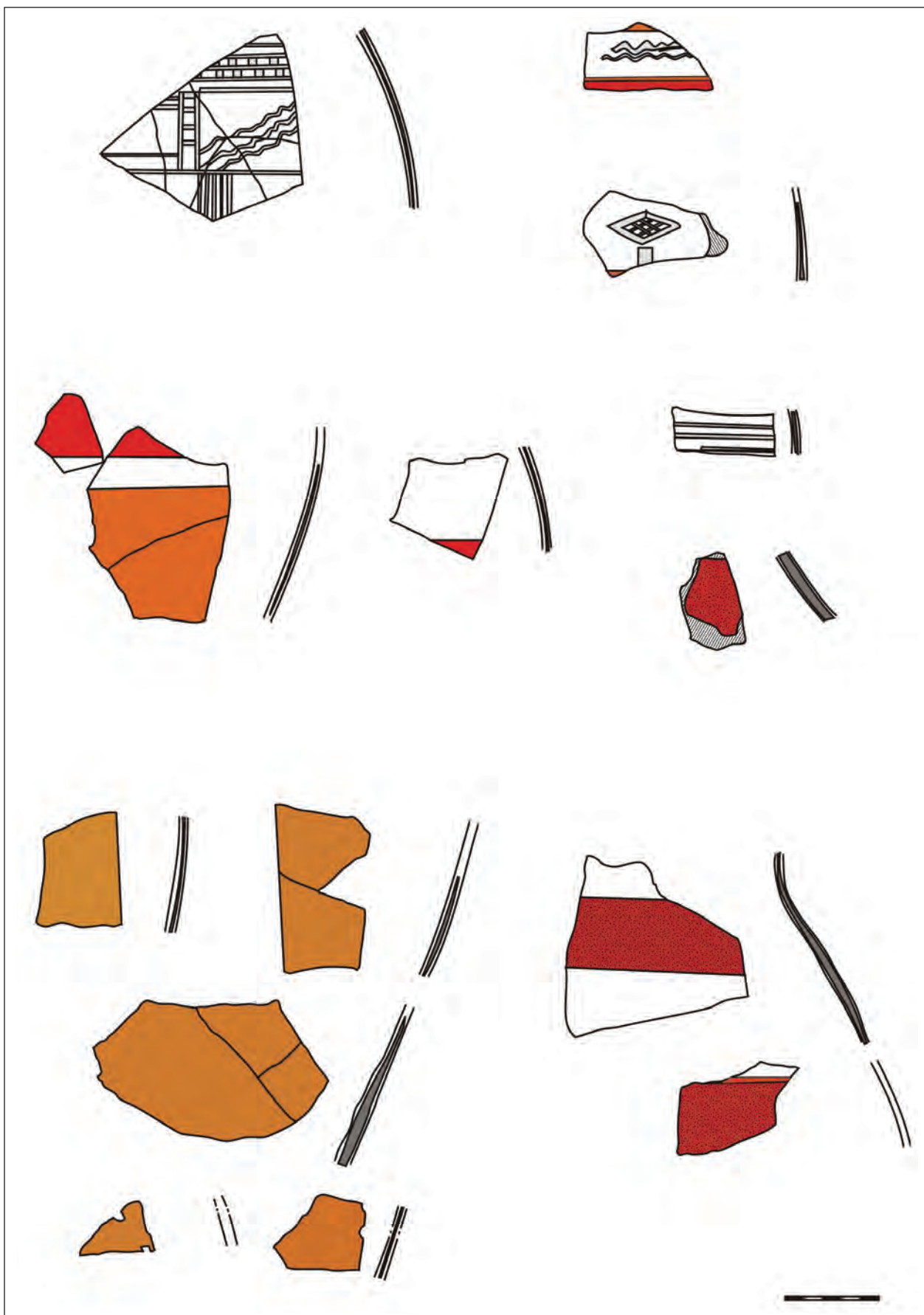
Pl. 1. Late Iron Age in the Iron Gates area. 1. Socol-Palanački Breg, Caraș-Severin; 2. Divici-Grad, Caraș-Severin; 3. Kumane-Prevod, Novi Becevi; 4. Moldova Veche-Insula Decebal, Caraș-Severin; 5. Pescari-Cula, Caraș-Severin; 6. Liubcova-Stenca, Caraș-Severin; 7. Dubova, Mehedinți; 8. Orsova, Mehedinți; 9. Drobeta-Turnu Severin, Mehedinți; 10. Ostrovul Șimian, Mehedinți; 11. Mala Vrbica, Kladovo; 12. Zbradila-Korbovo, Kladovo; 13. Vajuga-Pesak, Kladovo; 14. Veleznica, Kladovo; 15. Ljubicevac, Kladovo; 16. Izvorul Frumos, Mehedinți; 17. Mouth of the river Slatinska; 18. Balta Verde, Mehedinți; (rectangles – settlements; circles – settlements; stars – hoards).



Pl. 2. Fortified settlement from Divici-Grad. Archaeological research in the north-western part of the fortified area (after Rustoiu 2006/2007).



Pl. 3. Painted pottery from the tower-house of the 3rd inhabitancy level of Divici-Grad.



Pl. 4. Painted pottery from the tower-house of the 3rd inhabitancy level of Divici-Grad.